

**ISS Seminar Report:
The 2008/9 South African Crime Statistics
Pretoria, 8 October 2009**

Hosted by the Crime and Justice Programme, ISS Tshwane (Pretoria)

On the 22nd of September the South African Police Service (SAPS) released its crime statistics for the financial year 2008/09. The statistics showed that violent crime has increased over the past year, a fact that has caused a great deal of concern. In this seminar policing experts, Dr Johan Burger and Director Siemela of the SAPS, took an in-depth look at the crime statistics. Gareth Newham then spoke about the Gauteng Aggravated Robbery Strategy which holds some promise for making a positive contribution to the reduction of robbery in the province. The latest edition of SA Crime Quarterly was also launched at the seminar.

NOTE: Powerpoint presentations used at this seminar can be access on the *Criminal Justice* page of the ISS website.

Facilitator: Dr. Chandre Gould

Presenters:

- Director Seimela, Crime Information Analysis, SAPS: An analysis of the 2008/9 crime statistics
- Dr Johan Burger, ISS: Worrying crime trends
- Gareth Newham: Gauteng's Aggravated Robbery Strategy

Venue: ISS Conference Room, Block C, Brooklyn Court, 361 Veale Street, New Muckleneuk, Tshwane (Pretoria).

Notes from the presentations

Presentation 1 – Director Seimela

Director Seimela, a statistician working at Crime Information Analysis in the SAPS, presented an overview of the crime situation in the country. He began by introducing the five general categories into which the SAPS orders serious crimes, and presented the percentage of total crime for which each accounted. These were:

- Contact crime (32.7%)
- Contact related crime (6.7%)
- Crimes dependent on police action (8.9%)
- Property related crime (25.4%)

- Other crime (26.3%)

In total these categories represented 2 098 229 cases of reported crime, an increase of 0.2% from 2007/08.

Director Seimela explained that contact crime -that which involves contact between the offender and victim such as robbery, rape or assault, was the most concerning to the SAPS. This is both because it accounts for the largest general category of crime, and due to the extremely negative impact such crimes have on South Africans' sense of safety.

Three categories of serious crime saw reductions year on year, while 'crimes dependent on police action' and 'other serious crime' saw increases of 7,7% and 2.9% respectively. Director Seimela emphasized the fact that the growth in crimes dependent on police action, such as drunk driving arrests, should be viewed positively as it indicates a higher work rate on the part of the police.

Director Seimela then gave detailed breakdowns of various categories of crime, all of which can be found in his presentation.

It was noted that statistics showed an increase of 10.1%. in reported cases of sexual offences The SAPS chose not to explore this category in detail for the past financial year due to recent changes in the Prevention of Sexual Offences (and Related Matters) Act which vastly broadened the categories of crime now covered. Next year's statistics will explore this category in more depth.

Incongruence was also noted by the SAPS with regards to ATM bombing and Cash in Transit (CIT) robbery trends. When ATM bombings were most prevalent in mid-2008, CIT attacks stabilised. When police and banks began cracking down on ATM attacks, CIT robberies began increasing again. In the subsequent presentation Dr. Burger put this down to the 'planning and risk analysis' conducted by organized crime groups.

Presentation 2 – Dr. Johan Burger

Dr Burger began his presentation by highlighting the point where the rise in serious and violent crime post-1994 peaked around 2001. He illustrated how it had then begun to decline steadily. However, the latest crime statistics show slight but worrying rises across what he called 21 serious crime categories.

Despite this slight rise, murder continues to decline. Dr. Burger drew an international comparison with the murder rates of a number of countries but stressed that of Columbia. He noted that since 2000, Columbia was able to decrease its murder rate from 62.7:100 000 to 36: 100 000. This compared to South Africa's decrease of 49.6:100 000 in 2000 to the present 37.5:100 000. (This subject was

raised later by Gareth Newham, and again during the course of the question and answer session)

Emphasis was then placed on the trio crimes: house robbery (+13.5%), business robbery (+47.4%) and carjacking (+4.4%). Dr. Burger noted the negative impact these crimes have on citizens' sense of safety, and noted the concerning increase in each category. He noted the grossly disproportionate number of these crimes occurring in Gauteng, but said provinces like Kwa-Zulu Natal and the Western Cape were catching up.

Presentation 3 – Gareth Newham

Mr Newham gave a presentation on the **Error! Reference source not found.'s** Aggravated Robbery Strategy. (An article written on the subject by him appears in the edition of Crime Quarterly which was launched at the event). By way of introduction it was noted that

- Aggravated robbery refers to a criminal incident where a perpetrator uses the direct threat of violence against a victim, typically with a firearm, to steal their valuables.
- During 2008/09 a total of 50 886 cases were recorded in Gauteng – an average of 140 per day.
- Gauteng records 42% of all cases recorded in South Africa.
- With a victimisation rate of 487 cases per 100 000 people, Gauteng residents are almost twice as likely to fall victim than the average South African resident

The latests statistics show increases in all types of aggravated robbery (car, truck, ATM, CIT, business, residential) except street robbery. Trio crimes continue to rise.

Mr Newham recalled Operation Iron Fist of 2006 where police significantly stepped up their visible presence, including roadblocks, in an attempt to arrest crime. This had no impact. The aggravated robbery strategy is an intelligence driven response to this failure. It is believed that:

- CIT heists, bank robberies & some Trio robberies tend to be committed by relatively small number of highly organised groups.
- Most Trio robberies committed by groups of 2 or 3 people.
- Perpetrators are likely to have committed other crimes such as street robbery and 'graduate' to Trio crimes due to the economic incentives involved.
- Growth in Trio crimes partly as a result of low chance of being arrested and convicted.
- There are a limited number of perpetrators who are linked to networks & they always leave evidence behind.

So around 3000 individuals are responsible for the gross majority of aggravated robberies in Gauteng, and that these individuals grossly skew public perceptions of safety. It is believed that through targeted police work these offenders can be arrested. This involves:

- Strengthening crime intelligence and analysis.
- Establishment of specialised investigation task teams.
- Enhancing forensic support to investigators.
- Improving rapid response to robberies.
- Intelligence led disruption operations.
- Improving case management through the CJS.
- Establishment of the Crime Management Centre for coordination and technical assistance.

Mr. Newhams presentation was followed by forty minutes of questions and answers, and a light lunch.

Attendance:

The seminar was well attended with approximately seventy guests representing a cross section of stakeholders. These included members of the Swedish Embassy, Canadian High Commission, Australian High Commission, Embassy of Ireland, Embassy of Belgium, British High Commission, Embassy of Japan, the SAPS and the media.

This seminar was funded by the Hanns Seidel Foundation.